THE CRITICS' CORNER.

WEEKLY CHAT REGARDING WRITERS AND BOOKS.

Thomas Nelson Page—The Southern Magazine for March—Literary, Art, and Musical Notes.

Some Trifling Errata.

The recent acrimonious review of Mr. Thomas Nelson Page's tale of "Two Little Confederates" which appeared in the columns of the "Religious Herald" recalls the discussion of a year ago, when the columns of "The Times" resounded with the din of protest. Though the bearer of a historic Virginia name of late Mr. Page's work seems to have disagreed with his fellow-countrymen—perhaps because they took him for what he is not. In truth, Mr. Page is not a historian, nor even an exact annalist, but a pleasant writer of fiction, somewhat careless of fact, who has caught, at times with rare fidelity, the atmosphere of a vanished past. His literary interests lying in the north, it is natural that he should shade his pictures toward the side of northern taste. Let us take him as he is!

Turning to the hasty and unfortunate sketch—"In Virginia Long Ago"—if tradition be true, then is Mr. Page true to the life of his caste. Democracy had not then reached the upper classes in that locality, however much we may regret it. If the picture does not please everyone, that is a mere matter of taste. There are charming touches of local color here, as when he declares that each horseman at "Fork church" pre-emptied a certain bough, and that it was a breach of manners to tie within "kicking distance" of that spot. Nor was it necessary for artistic effect to turn the other side.

As set forth by the same tradition, how provincial, how narrow, were the lives of these same gentry of the "upper neighborhood" eighty years ago!

Frequent intermarriages, seclusion, and a serene confidence in their heaven-born, all-sufficing station, had played havoc with the pristine graces and ambitions of a well enough dowered English stock. If their houses were "plain," as set forth by Mr. Page, they of the long ago were for the most part still plainer in manner, appearance, and taste. They never doubted that the sun rose and set for them; yet the arrogance, although dull, was kindly. They bore the stamp of sterling virtues, to atone for aristocracy!

A God-fearing race, truthful to bluntness, honest without question, hospitable by instinct, church of England to the core—yet in some families there was a Methodistical fervor of piety. Altogether a curious record of local Virginia arlstocracy.

According to biography, the lovely Quakeress, Dolly Todd —(Mrs. Madison)—was born in North Carolina, of Virginia parentage—certainly not at Scotch Town, Hanover—the home of Patrick Henry. Mr. Page seems equally ignorant of the history and mystery of that old colonial manor house—not the only romance that has escaped him in that seemingly common-place neighborhood. The crumbling outlines of a castle, burnt before completion, were visible a few years ago on a rising ground near the present old mansion. The English colonel who built both, the man he killed for some farcical affront to a beautiful daughter—flit through the vistas of tradition like veritable old-world spectres. There are blood stains—so accounted—still on the floors—there is a little cell always called "the dungeon." Old negroes sun the ghosts of this tragedy and on windy nights heard wild cries from the dungeon. Did the Colonel really cut down his man? Did he then take poison rather than meet his fate at plebian hands? Did the fair daughter return to England? Who can tell?—But the massive mansion-house still stands intact, lying, like a stranded, weather-beaten hull on the undulating, wasted sea of fields once so wide and fertile.

It is to be feared that Mr. McCarthy's facts, also, are not too well considered, although, perhaps too trifling to be reviewed. It is hardly to be expected that he should, in the heat of dire indignation, have stopped to inform himself on old Virginia family history, yet it is remarkable, in the face of a recent and readable biography by his distinguished grandson, that he should not have known how to class Patrick Henry—a man of excellent Scotch lineage, allied to Lord Brougham, his father a classical scholar, his uncle an English rector, his mother of a good colonial family—in no sense, by descent, a "poor white." The Jacksons, from a distant part of the State, have no advantage of local history in Eastern Virginia. Scotch covenanters, pure and simple, proud, fearless, stern and able, as a race, they can hardly be classed—certainly not among "half strainers." Without making any pretension to aristocratic lineage, or caring for such distinction, Stonewall Jackson's ancestors were leaders among their people before he came. Such blood is not made in a day! They were from the first, soldiers, politicians, jurists. They fought in the French and Indian and Revolutionary war. Colonel George Jackson, uncle of our great captain, was sent to the Constitutional Convention of 1788, to the first Congress, married a sister of Mrs. Madison, became a United States judge—was, in fact, the leading spirit of his portion of the State. But the history of this family is written in the annals of West Virginia, and so long as there were men to master, the Jacksons were content. There was stuff enough in Stonewall Jackson out of which to make his own ancestors, but knowing how much he owed to them of brain and bone and iron will and dauntless courage, one can but make some plea.

THE SOUTHERN MAGAZINE.

Brief Comment Upon the Contents of the March Issue.

The March number of this distinctively Southern publication shows a stronger and more attractive table of contents than any of the preceding issues for this year. The fiction is, as in former numbers, the weak point. The stories show neither strength and consistency in plot nor originality and grace in the style of narration; but the articles on general subjects are exceptionally strong and entertainingly written. The editors manifest positive genius in the selection of their leaders. Last month Mr. W. L. Shppard opened the magazine with a finely written and beautifully illustrated paper on Aix-la-chapelle, under the title of "The City of The Great Charles;" this month "Sedan in '70," by Bertha Von Tauber—Harper is given similar prominence, and as was the case with Mr. Sheppard's admirable article, more than merits the position accorded it. Illustrations representing the great trio,—Bismarck, Von Moltke, and Frederick William;—Sedan from different points of view, and Napoleon III., are by W. J. Dodd.

Mrs. Harper, whose work is destined to be generally and thoroughly enjoyed, was born in Munich in 1853, and is a descendant of Bavarian nobility, her grandfather having occupied high official position under the Bavarian Kings. Her early childhood was spent in the house of Dr. Hermann Von Lings, one of Germany's great poets. As a child of ten, she remembers the faces of Frederick von Bodenstedt, Paul Heyse, Franz Von Lenbach, and others, who have since become famous in literature and art, as she saw them at the garden fetes given by Dr. Von Lingg. At sixteen she became German tutor and student of French at the Convent de l' Assomption, which she soon left to become governess in the family of one of the leading citizens of Sedan, entering upon her new duties June 6, 1870—the very day that France declared war against Germany. All other German residents were at once expelled from French soil, she being the only German who witnessed the attack from within the city. In 1875, she was married to Mr. Harper, then an American student at the University of Munich, and she now resides with her husband, who is superintendent of Schools, at Americus, Ga. Naturally, she is especially well qualified to tell the story of that conflict which was as illustrious and as significant as bloody, and she tells it with simplicity, directness, feeling, and grace. The other papers upon general themes are without exception, strong and attractive, notably those of James Wier, Jr., M. D., Calvin Dill Wilson, Edward Ingle, and Evelyn Baker Dodd.

In the department devoted to "Comment and Criticism" General Marcus J. Wright contributes an article upon "Governor Merriwether Lewis" in which he contradicts the statement made by Verne S. Pease that the distinguished traveller met his death at the hands of the notorious Grinder.

In the comment as above upon the fiction contained in the March number we should not have included the story "Gone to Cooperstown," by C. W. Tyler. It is entitled to praise and is piquant, racy, and attractive.

Each issue of the "Southern" shows an increase in strength and attractiveness over the numbers which have preceded it, and the magazine is getting the hold upon the popular Southern interest which its merits warrant. It is distinctively a medium for the writers of the South. It aims to encourage literary cultivation and effort in a section, which has, since the cruel war between the States, suffered from every sort of ill that such a catastrophe can entail, and in which the children of landed proprietors of other days are earning the wherewithal to support that life which is more than meat by weaving into graceful and pathetic fiction the traditions of their people and the sweet customs of the devastated, sorely wounded but superbly courageous South. It has, of necessity, a future whose success must increase as that South stretches forth stronger and stronger effort.

LITERARY AND OTHER NOTES.

Facts Regarding a Number of Celebrities.

Prof. Tyndall is limned by Grant Allen in a vivid sketch in the current Review of Reviews. In the article occurs a grouping of three great names in a summary so suggestive as to merit quoting: "Herbert Spencer, by far the greatest and widest-minded of the three, was the philosopher and organizer of the evolutionary movement; to him, and to him alone, we owe the very word evolution, and the conception of the thing itself as an all-embracing and consistent cosmical process. Huxley, again, was the biologist and popularizer; less philosophic and infinitely less cosmic in type than Spencer, the gods have dowered him with the gift of exposition; he could make things clear with his pen to the man in the street; while Spencer, too much occupied with the vast task of setting forth a synthesis of the universe and of human thought within a single lifetime, had no leisure to make them clear to any but scientific and philosophical readers. Tyndall, last of all, was the orator and the physicist. He had the gift of the gab. He could speak with tongues, where the other two could only think and write and permeate. And his adhesion as physicist was of the greatest importance."

Among the old masters shown in London at the Royal Academy is a portrait, by Vandyke, of James Stuart, Duke of Richmond and Lennox, loaned by the Earl of Leicester. This portrait is very like the one belonging to Mr. Henry G. Marquand, but is said to be no repetition in all respects. A third portrait of the same duke, by Vandyke, is in the Louvre. He stands with a fruit in his hand, and has discarded cloak and coat, appearing in white shirt and crimson breeches.

FOOD FOR REFLECTION.

GATHERED FROM THE RELIGIOUS AND GENERAL PRESS.

Words of Wisdom on Religious and Moral Subjects Which are Worthy of Attention from the Thoughtful.

What Christ Said.

I said, "Let me walk in the fields."
He said, "No, walk in the town.
I said, "There are no flowers there."
He said, "No flowers, but a crown."

I said, "But the skies are black—
There is nothing but noise and din."
And He wept as He sent me back:
"There is more," He said, "There is sin."

I said, "But the air is thick,
And fogs are veiling the sun."
He answered, "Yet souls are sick,
And souls in the dark undone."

I said, "I shall miss the light,
And friends will miss me, they say."
He answered, "Choose thou to-night,
If I am to miss you, or they."

ONE DAY IN THE SEVEN.

Necessary to the Health of Man's Body, Mind, and Soul.

Why did God write those four commandments in the first table of the law? Not merely because it is intrinsically right and proper that man should love and honor a pure and holy God, his Maker and Judge; should worship Him alone as a spiritual being, not degrading him by fashioning any graven image to represent Him, and honoring His holy name and His holy day, but also because it was absolutely indispensable to the welfare of his fellowmen that man should thus treat God with reverence and love. Man necessarily assimilates to the standards of character he admires. Whenever he chooses any being as the supreme object of his admiring regard, that being becomes to him the highest pattern of conduct. When he lifts his eyes to it in continual acts of worship, he thereby declares its worthship or worthiness. If it is a Pantheon, full of cruel, lustful, revengeful divinities, which he worships, he will necessarily become conformed more and more to the standard he thus sets up. "They that make them are like unto them." If he can speak with flippant irreverence of God's name, which is the description of God's character, the holy and good, he will come to have little reverence for those principles of righteousness and mercy which form the basis of the divine character, and his fellowmen will soon come to feel the terrors of his own unrighteousness and unmercifulness. If he care so little for spiritual things that he will not take the time God has bidden him take for training his spiritual nature, that nature will lack needed spiritual training, and inevitably his fellowmen will come to feel the baneful influence of that defect in his character.

Through the voice, not alone of written revelation, but through the cry of man's entire nature, body, soul, and spirit, God has made known His will that man should take one day in seven to rest the body and train the soul. His body needs it, his mind needs it, his soul needs it. These voices of man's nature are the voice of God. They show the Sabbath law of rest and worship, that one day in seven be devoted to religious uses, save as the works of necessity or mercy prevent. And not to do this is to rebel against God, and to do that enfeebles and degrades one's character so much that the man becomes less of a helpful force in society, more likely to be an element of danger to his brother man than if in this he obeyed God.—Exchange.

The Almighty Plan.

Happy it is to labor when all nature around, set in motion direct by the Almighty's power, is constantly forwarding work to my hand. Did he that placed me here mean me to do my work loosely, negligently, slothfully? Surely not; see how these fruits are made—how perfectly, how wholesomely, how pleasantly. All He has done by his own hand in the process of provision is done well. What I do must be done well. "Be not slothful in business," comes home to my ear from the double voices of revelation and of its echo, nature. I must not be slothful; God has set me to work, man needs to be served. Then I am here to do all that I can do to promote the welfare of mankind, and to fulfil the appointment of my Maker.—Samuel Budgett.

Fainting at the Door.

There is a story of a prodical who came back from the far country and could not find his father's house. He wandered on and on, and at last in the gathering night sank down heart-sick and faint, on the steps of a little cottage. Without knowing it he was on his own father's doorstep. Inside sat the aged father and mother, their hearts hungering for their long-lost boy. Outside, bowed and crushed and longing for love and for home, lay the weary, homesick son—on the very threshold of home, but not knowing it.

So near to the gates of heaven is every human soul that is penitent, weary of sin, longing for divine mercy and love. There are many who are not yet in Christ's kingdom, but who have at least some desire for heaven's peace. They do not know where to find what they seek. But close by them is one of heaven's gates and they have but to arise in their penitence and enter into the Father's house.—J. R. Miller.

Discontent.

A wise man in abject want was eating some garden stuff which he had picked up; and he said to himself, "Surely there is no one in the world more poor and wretched than I am," and he turned round, and beheld another wise man eating the leaves which he had thrown away.

THE SAVIOUR OF THE POOR.

The Divine Humanitarian—His Cure for Degradation.

There were as many evils in Christ's day as now. There were then the lapsed classes, the dwellers in lanes, the victims of sin and misery of every kind. What was Christ's cure? Christ said, Evangelize them. Did He blunder? Was He lacking in gentleness and love? Perish the thought! He was the true Reformer, the Divine Humanitarian, the Spiritual Regenerator of the individual and the race. There is profound philosophy in his method. His spirit teaches the rich and the poor alike to recognize the poor man's manhood. This is a recognition of tremendous power. It gives hope, light, life to the poor. It lets into the poorest home and the saddest heart a flash of the glory of the millennial dawn. It gives those who are up tenderness for those who are down; it gives those who are down trustfulness toward those who are up. The preacher of the Gospel is the poor man's best earthly friend. He tells of a Christ who was poor, and who has sanctified and forever glorified poverty. Christ's incarnation has lifted the world into the sunshine of hope and the promise of heaven. It has leveled society by lifting the down-trodden—leveled it up. It makes lowliness loftiness, meekness mightiness, and gentleness greatness. Guizot says that "Christianity has carried repentance even into the souls of nations. Pagan antiquity knew nothing of these awakenings of the public conscience. Tacitus could only deplore the decay of the ancient rites of Rome, and Marcus Aurelius could only wrap himself sorrowful up in the stoical isolation of the sage; there is nothing to show that these superior minds so much as suspect the great crimes of their social state, even in its best days, or aspired to reform them." The world's hope in every relation of life is in this old Gospel. It must have its place in every heart; it must throw its radiance over every home; it must be in every workshop and counting house.—Exchange.

Spiritual Energy.

Reflect that it is only the fervent and diligent soul that is prepared for all duty and all events; that it is greater toil to resist evil habits and violent passions than to sweat at the hardest bodily labor; that he who is not careful to resist and subdue small sins will insensibly fall into greater, and that thou shalt always have joy in the evening if thou hast spent the day well.—Thomas A. Kempis.

RELIGIOUS NOTES.

Regarding News in the Churches Generally.

Brooklyn has long held undisputed the title of "The City of Churches," but the boast belongs to Philadelphia. In his review of religion in America, based upon the census of 1890, and just published, D. A. H. Carroll, who had charge of the division of churches, declares that Philadelphia possesses the most church edifices of any city in the union. He gives the aggregate number as 664, of which 136 belong to the Presbyterians, 127 to the Methodists, 102 to the Episcopalians, 95 to the Baptists, 61 to Catholics, and 41 to the Lutherans. New York has only 534 churches. Chicago has 500 temples of worship. "Pennsylvania," Dr. Carroll states, "is the stronghold of Lutherans, Presbyterians, Moravians, Mennonites, and German Reformed; strangely enough the Friends are missing from this list. That distinctly Philadelphia sect is now more numerous in Indiana than in this State. Pennsylvania still holds all the Seventh Day Dunkards in the country, and there are only a few of them.

The Church Times, London, is surprised to learn from a circular that is being issued to the clergy, that the Dean and Chapter of St. Paul's purpose to identify themselves with the World's Conference of Young Men's Christian Associations." It is there stated that a public service is to take place in the cathedral on June 5th. Archdeacon Sinclair's name being attached to the letter of sympathy, which is appended to this circular, together with the signatures of the Presidents of the Wesleyan, English Presbyterian, Baptist, and Congregationalist bodies, it is assumed that the cathedral is to be lent for the occasion. Even the Primate has given a kind of approval to the Conference, which the Church Times thinks will be interpreted as sanctioning the theory of "the Churches," on which these reunions are founded.

Mr. Price Collier, in the current Forum discusses "Professional Incomes in England." The plums are only eaten by a few; the Archbishop of Canterbury receiving $75,000 a year; the successful barrister from $75,000 to $100,000 a year; and the successful physician $80,000 to $100,000. The chasm between the successful and the non-successful is very striking. While the Archbishop gets $75,000 annually, the average clerical income is $600; the average barrister's $1,200; the average medical man's $1,300; but unfortunately Mr. Collier does not explain how this disparity of incomes is to be remedied.

The Catholic Register, Toronto, says: The Holy Father's encyclical on the Bible has created a great sensation among the scholars of Europe. It has been lauded by reviewers in Germany and England. Several Catholic faculties of France and Belgium have congratulated the Holy Father, and expressed their acceptance of the doctrines in that valuable encyclical, "which" as a Roman correspondent says, "puts an end to the keen and impassioned discussions upon certain interpretations of the sacred Scriptures, which divided the learned in the Catholic world."

The Moniteur de Rome announces the beatification of Joan of Arc, and the Tablet, the leading Roman Catholic journal of Great Britain, says that this great event in history was brought about after a protracted inquiry, which has included the examination of more than six hundred documents bearing upon the case.